

PTUKH

Sci-Fi. Comedy.

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Short Film

2024

1. EXT./INT. STARRY SKY / ALEXEY'S ROOM - NIGHT

An endless starry sky.

TITLES.

ANCHORWOMAN (V.O.)

From the Emergency Operations Headquarters, we've been informed that tonight, the front of ball lightning will reach the border of our region. Reports of this terrifying natural phenomenon began coming in two weeks ago. Now, we're talking about tens of thousands of ball lightnings. They're concentrating over major energy facilities, industrial plants, and government buildings. The cities are in panic.

The sky is visible through the open window of a room in a city apartment block.

On the dusty windowsill: an astrolabe, half a jar of pickles, a large wrench, and an old alarm clock.

In the room: a fridge, a stove, some bottles, a mop in the corner, a wall mirror, a ragged armchair near the window, a telescope, and a round table. One wall is out of view.

At the table, ALEXEY (45) is dozing with his hands under his head. In front of him: an open bottle of vodka, a glass, an ashtray full of cigarette butts, a photo of a full-figured, heavily made-up woman with a stern teacher's look, and a small flat TV playing the news.

On TV: a studio, the ANCHORWOMAN (30) sits at a table with an EXPERT (55).

ANCHORWOMAN

The governor has urged the public to remain calm, stay indoors, close windows, unplug electrical appliances, and evacuate according to plans in the event of fire. In the studio with us is an expert in emergency response...

Her voice fades into the background. A soft baritone begins to speak — it's PTUKH, an unseen and disembodied alien. His voice resonates in Alexey's head, but we hear it as if he were real.

PTUKH

(gently)

Wakey-wakey...

Alexey smacks his lips, still asleep.

EXPERT

As often happens, panic can be more dangerous than the phenomenon itself. Charlatans, psychics, fortune-tellers, or even just unstable people exploit that panic.

PTUKH

(louder)

Come on, wake up! They're talking about you.

Alexey lifts his head, looks around groggily, shakes it, rubs his face.

On screen: footage of Alexey himself – hair wild, eyes bulging, shouting and waving his arms. Two orderlies seize him and shove him into an ambulance. No sound.

EXPERT (V.O.)

For example, yesterday a lunatic ran through the streets claiming ball lightning was caused by a malevolent quantum alien entity planning to destroy Earth.

(laughter in the studio)

Alexey grabs a cigarette pack – empty.

On the screen, the anchorwoman and expert suddenly jump up. A red orb appears in the studio – there's a flash, a dry loud crack. The image vanishes. Static flickers.

ALEXEY

Idiots!

## 2. INT. ALEXEY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alexey fishes a cigarette butt out of the ashtray and lights it.

Suddenly, a hoarse, choking cough bursts through the air – PTUKH's voice. Alexey glances around, startled.

PTUKH

(coughing)

Stop that!

Alexey quickly stubs out the cigarette.

PTUKH

I can't stand smoke.

ALEXEY

Who's there?

PTUKH

It's me.

Alexey presses his palm to his forehead in fear, rushes to the mirror, peers at his reflection, then shifts his gaze to a green toy devil on the shelf. He stares at its grinning face.

PTUKH

Don't worry, I'm not some drunken hallucination. As far as I can tell, the real delirium tremens won't hit you for another... six months. So relax.

A breeze from the open window stirs the curtain. Alexey yanks it aside.

ALEXEY

Where are you?

PTUKH

Right here. Inside your head. Testing, one-two-three. Can you hear me?

ALEXEY

(confused)

I hear you... but you're not real.

PTUKH

Not real? I think, therefore I am! Sure, I don't have a body – but the rest is all here!

ALEXEY

The rest? What do you mean?

PTUKH

Intellect.

ALEXEY

(in awe)

You're a quantum entity?

PTUKH

Naturally. All advanced civilizations eventually ditch biological bodies.

ALEXEY

So I was right!

PTUKH

Absolutely. You're the only person on this planet who figured it out. That's why I came to you.

ALEXEY  
(bitterly)  
And they still call me insane...

PTUKH  
They blamed your brilliant  
deduction on booze, not your mind.  
Classic case, Alexey.

ALEXEY  
What's your name?

PTUKH  
Our names have no acoustic  
equivalent. But based on your  
language's phonosemantic logic... it  
would sound like Ptukh.

ALEXEY  
All those fires, those lightning  
balls – was that you?

PTUKH  
No. But I know who did it.

ALEXEY  
Who?

PTUKH  
A lunatic. A serial destroyer. He's  
already wiped out several planets.

The TV begins to show a rapid slideshow. Alexey walks over  
and watches.

Slide after slide – with the sound of a camera shutter:  
blurry planet photos, fires, volcanoes, tsunamis, hydrogen  
bomb tests, fleeing crowds, paintings like The Last Day of  
Pompeii, Guernica, Premonition of Civil War, bizarre deep-sea  
creatures, insects, the frightened eyes of wild animals.

PTUKH  
You're lucky I finally managed to  
track him down.

ALEXEY  
(suspiciously)  
You sure you're not some orderly  
from the psych ward?

PTUKH  
No. I'm field ops.

ALEXEY  
Well... that's a bit more acceptable.  
So what are you gonna do – kill  
him?

PTUKH

I don't have that kind of clearance. I'm here to help you eliminate him.

ALEXEY

(stunned)

Me?!

PTUKH

Yes. Despite your chronic alcoholic state, your brain is still up to the task.

ALEXEY

How the hell am I supposed to kill him? With what?

PTUKH

You'll need a de-generator.

ALEXEY

A what now?

PTUKH

A de-generator. A device that does the opposite of generating energy.

ALEXEY

I don't have a de-generator!

PTUKH

Then you'll have to build one.

ALEXEY

You're joking. He'll be here any minute!

PTUKH

Fifteen minutes. We've got time, if you pull yourself together. First thing we need is a guide rod. Some kind of stick.

ALEXEY

This is insane...

(points to the mop in the corner)

Will that do?

PTUKH

Perfect! Now we need three containers — like those.

Alexey looks at the empty beer bottles.

ALEXEY

Bottles? What for?

PTUKH

I'll explain later. Don't waste time!

3. INT. ALEXEY'S ROOM - NIGHT (FLASH SEQUENCE)

Everything moves in fast-forward. Alexey rushes madly around the room, grabbing various household objects – beer bottles, forks, glasses, a smoking pipe, clothespins, wires.

He kneels over the mob, wildly taping objects to it with duct tape, twisting wires, wrapping, attaching, sticking.

It looks like he's building a bizarre alien weapon out of total junk – with a sense of drunken urgency and half-mad genius.

4. INT. ALEXEY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alexey holds the weird construction in his hands like a rifle.

PTUKH

Try it. Is it comfortable?

Alexey shoulders the mop like a weapon, aims it out the window. The dry crackling outside grows louder. Red flashes from distant ball lightning dance across his face.

ALEXEY

There he is! We're too late!

PTUKH

Stay calm! We're almost there! Just need a sighting device. Get a mirror.

ALEXEY

What mirror?

PTUKH

A small one. Like a lady's compact.

ALEXEY

I don't have a lady's compact!

PTUKH

Then any small mirror!

ALEXEY

I don't have any!

The crackling becomes a barrage. The red flashes from outside start to flicker violently across the room.

PTUKH  
Find one! Hurry!

Alexey frantically searches the room, tearing open drawers, scattering clothes and items. He repeatedly runs past the large wall mirror.

ALEXEY  
(frustrated)  
Can't I use something else instead?

PTUKH  
(panicking)  
No! Keep looking! He's almost here!  
I can feel him!

The crackling outside becomes deafening. The power cuts – the lights and TV go dark. Only red explosions from the window light the room.

PTUKH  
Now! Quick!

Alexey glances at the wall mirror. In a flash, he grabs the wrench from the windowsill and smashes the mirror. Glass rains down. He picks up a shard.

ALEXEY  
Got one!

PTUKH  
Stick it into the clothespin!  
Quick!

Alexey clips the mirror shard into the clothespin on the mop.

PTUKH  
Now we've got him. Aim!

ALEXEY  
I can't see – the mirror's in the way!

PTUKH  
Look into the mirror!

ALEXEY  
That's bad luck!

PTUKH  
Bad luck is outside the window! You need to see your own eye in that mirror! Do you?

ALEXEY  
I see it!

PTUKH

Good! Now – left! A little higher!  
Up! Stop! Perfect! Ready?

ALEXEY

Ready!

PTUKH

Fire!

Alexey presses a makeshift trigger – a bent eyeglass arm.

Suddenly, complete silence. Total darkness.

##### 5. INT. ALEXEY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Out of the darkness, under a faintly pulsing glow, Alexey's face emerges. The light slowly grows, but stays dim and eerie.

He stares out the window.

Suddenly, the fridge lurches with a loud rumble. The lights snap back on – harsh and sudden – revealing Alexey frozen in place.

PTUKH

Well, would you look at that. It worked.

Alexey looks at the mop in his hands – baffled, amazed.

PTUKH

So... since my mission is complete,  
I guess I'll be on my way.

ALEXEY

(leaning the mop against  
the table)

Hey, wait! What do you mean "on  
your way"? Aren't we gonna  
celebrate?

PTUKH

Celebrate?

ALEXEY

(pouring vodka)

Of course! That's how we do it  
here.

(raises glass)

To new friends!

He downs the shot in one gulp. Ptukh gasps – a loud, awkward inhale, like someone being punched in the soul.

PTUKH  
(croaking)  
What... a vile... substance!

Alexey grabs the pickle jar from the windowsill.

ALEXEY  
Hold on, this'll help.

He takes a big swig of brine.

PTUKH  
"Help"... You people shove anything  
in your mouths!

ALEXEY  
(genuinely concerned)  
Feeling better?

PTUKH  
Ugh... I think so. The digestive  
membrane warmed up a bit.

Alexey returns to the table and sits.

ALEXEY  
Now it's your turn – your toast.

PTUKH  
(worried)  
What, drink again?

ALEXEY  
Of course! That's the rule!

PTUKH  
No, Alexey. I'm not doing that  
again.

ALEXEY  
Don't you respect me?

PTUKH  
I do. But I still won't drink. And  
you shouldn't either.

ALEXEY  
(pleading)  
Just a tiny sip! Come on, we just  
saved the world!

PTUKH  
Fine... but just a little.  
(Alexey pours)  
Stop! Stop, stop, stop!

ALEXEY  
Alright, alright.  
(raises glass)  
Go ahead – say something.

PTUKH  
Well then... To the triumph of reason  
over chaos!

ALEXEY  
Amen to that!

He drinks.

ALEXEY  
See? Not so bad, right?

PTUKH  
(strained)  
Just... fine...

ALEXEY  
Knew you'd come around.

PTUKH  
There's... a lightness in the limbs.  
Though... the nerve cells...

ALEXEY  
What nerve cells?

PTUKH  
Not my business, but... they're  
dying. You've already lost–

ALEXEY  
(interrupts)  
To hell with the cells! They'll  
grow back!

PTUKH  
They won't. Nerve cells don't  
regenerate.

ALEXEY  
Screw it. Now tell me – how did you  
get here?

PTUKH  
Me? Like everyone. Through the  
fourth dimension.

ALEXEY  
No kidding! What's it like?

PTUKH  
Hard to explain. It's basically... a  
point the size of the universe.

ALEXEY  
(smacking fist into palm)  
I knew it! Can one go in?

PTUKH  
One can. Anywhere. Even here.

ALEXEY  
Then let's go!

PTUKH  
No. Sorry. You can't. You're  
banned. I'm really sorry.

ALEXEY  
Banned? By who?

PTUKH  
The Intergalactic Council.

ALEXEY  
Why?!

PTUKH  
No clue. You flunked some test.  
Maybe the sonigression index test  
or something.

ALEXEY  
Sonigress... what now?

PTUKH  
A standard test for species using  
mechanical transport. They measure  
the frequency, intensity, and  
emotional modulation of car horns  
in cities.

ALEXEY  
You tested us on that?

PTUKH  
Yep.

ALEXEY  
Where?

PTUKH  
Moscow, I think.

ALEXEY  
You couldn't pick somewhere else?  
Like... Bruges?

PTUKH  
Hey, I don't make the rules. I'm  
just field ops.  
(ДАЛЬШЕ)

PTUKH (ПРОД.)

They say it's banned, it's banned.  
Why? Not my department.

ALEXEY

That's discrimination!

PTUKH

I don't disagree...

(pause)

Hey, why does the room look  
brighter all of a sudden?

ALEXEY

That's why vodka exists. Another?

PTUKH

Pour it!

ALEXEY

(pouring)

I'd like to drink to your health,  
Ptukh, my brother in intellect.  
Thanks for helping save our  
civilization!

(drinks)

PTUKH

Always a pleasure!

Alexey glances around like a secret agent, then leans closer  
to the air – to Ptukh.

ALEXEY

(confiding)

You know, our civilization... it  
might not seem worth saving. We've  
got enough crap, to be honest.  
Wars... Psychiatry... Orderlies...  
And women, damn it –

(grabs the framed photo)

especially some of them...

(suddenly melancholic)

Sometimes it all just feels...  
cosmically revolting. You wanna run  
away from it all...

(throws the photo)

You understand?

PTUKH

(quietly)

I do. Run away... At least you've  
got somewhere to run. I'll admit –  
I even envy you. You guys can  
drink, smoke, do cross-stitch, read  
fantasy novels, watch Hollywood  
trash... You've got so many escapes.

(ДАЛЬШЕ)

PTUKH (ПРОД.)

(pause)

Us? We can't do any of that. You know what I'd give to just pick my nose?

ALEXEY

So even you...

PTUKH

(sighs)

Even us.

(perking up suddenly)

But hey — enough of this sad stuff! Chin up! I wanna propose a toast. Pour it!

Alexey pours and raises glasses.

PTUKH

To your victory!

ALEXEY

(solemn)

Our victory.

(drinks)

PTUKH

Don't be modest! You got him! Right in the center!

(mephistophelian laugh)

ALEXEY

Yeah, well, you helped build the weapon. That swab was your idea. Let's drink to teamwork!

(pours and drinks)

PTUKH

To coopa-coope... coop'ration! Hooray!

ALEXEY

Shh! Keep it down! Someone might hear us!

PTUKH

Hey, your brain is a total mess... Maybe I should move somewhere else? Into the TV or something?

ALEXEY

No way! Stay right here! What, I'm supposed to drink alone? We'll clean up in a bit. Coffee?

(ДАЛЬШЕ)

ALEXEY (ПРОД.)  
 (Alexey heads to the  
 stove, fiddling with the  
 coffee pot.)

ALEXEY  
 So tell me — how does that de-  
 generator work?

PTUKH  
 It doesn't.

ALEXEY  
 (freezes)  
 What?

PTUKH  
 You know why I'm slurring?

ALEXEY  
 You're not used to it. So?

PTUKH  
 Then pour me another — to build  
 tolerance.

Alexey walks to the table, pours a shot, raises his glass.

PTUKH  
 To you — protein-based warriors of  
 the invisible front!  
 (Alexey drinks)  
 You?

ALEXEY  
 I'm later. Now spill it — the  
 truth.  
 (grabs the mop)  
 Why the hell did you give me this  
 thing?

PTUKH  
 Otherwise, you wouldn't have  
 believed.

ALEXEY  
 Believed what?

PTUKH  
 That you could kill the maniac  
 yourself — with the power of your  
 ment'l... ment'field. Really, anyone  
 could've done it.  
 (philosophical)  
 See, thought is just a form of m-  
 matter... y'know?

ALEXEY  
(frowning)  
So?

PTUKH  
We, the h-highly evolved beings, we  
manipulate thought directly... You  
feel me?

ALEXEY  
Go on...

PTUKH  
But for lower beings, thought needs  
to be mater'nalized... m-  
materialized... You get it?

ALEXEY  
So?

PTUKH  
So the s... swab helped you  
physicalize your intent – and BAM!  
You blasted him! Yourself! You get  
it?

Alexey starts pacing, agitated, between the table and the  
window.

PTUKH  
The swab was just a distraction for  
your mind. Otherwise you'd still be  
overthinking. Doubting. Pacing like  
some damn philosophy major. Torn  
between thoughts...

ALEXEY  
(slams the table)  
Shut up!  
(Ptukh goes quiet)

ALEXEY  
So we're primitive, huh?

PTUKH  
Hey, hey – it's just a comparison!  
Nothing personal!

ALEXEY  
So I'm a cave monkey?

PTUKH  
I didn't say that!

ALEXEY  
A village idiot?!

PTUKH

Alexey, don't take it like that!  
Look at the big picture!

ALEXEY

(grabbing the mop)  
What if I shove this swab straight  
up your alien ass?!

PTUKH

(snaps, sober)  
Shove it in yourself! Scientist,  
huh? First contact! And instead of  
asking about stars and galaxies,  
you get drunk and pick a fight!

Alexey throws the swab across the room in rage.

ALEXEY

Bastard!

PTUKH

That's why they banned you from the  
fourth dimension! Rightly so! You'd  
be flying around our clean universe  
— causing drama everywhere!

ALEXEY

I'll punch you right in the face!

PTUKH

Yeah? Try it! No hands, genius!

ALEXEY

Get out of my head! Off my planet!

PTUKH

With pleasure! I'm sick of your  
drunk, ugly mugs!

ALEXEY

Get out!

PTUKH

And your vodka — sucks!

ALEXEY

OUT!!!

Alexey jerks his head like trying to shake Ptukh out. A small  
whirlwind blasts through the room. The window slams shut —  
bam! — like a door.

On the fogged glass, invisible fingers draw letters: "D I C"

Alexey grabs the vodka bottle and hurls it at the window —  
the glass shatters.

## 6. INT./EXT. ALEXEY'S ROOM / STARRY SKY - NIGHT

Alexey sleeps at the table – same pose as at the beginning.

PTUKH  
(gently)  
Alexey... Hey, Alexey...

Alexey smacks his lips in his sleep.

PTUKH  
I just came back to say sorry. I  
was wrong. Forgive me.

Alexey murmurs something incoherent.

PTUKH  
You're asleep? Alright, sleep then.  
I did some cleanup in your system –  
flushed the channels, tweaked a few  
neurons, fixed some odds and ends.  
You're healthy now. Just don't  
drink that vodka anymore, okay? You  
don't need it. You're a genius.

Now the wall we haven't seen before becomes visible: a giant school chalkboard, covered top to bottom in complex formulas and graphs.

One of the equations erases a "+" and replaces it with a "-".

PTUKH  
Oh, by the way – I checked your  
calculations. You're on the right  
path. If you go back to your work  
and finish the theory, you could  
open the fourth dimension for your  
civilization.  
So maybe... we'll meet again.  
Sleep well.

Alexey smiles slightly, still sleeping at the table in his tiny room.

Beyond the window: endless, starry sky.